

BRISTOL WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORKSHOP
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2007

The monthly workshop of the Bristol Warren Regional School Committee was held in the library of Mt. Hope High School, 199 Chestnut Street, Bristol, RI, on Monday, November 13, 2007. The Chairperson, William A. Estrella, Jr, called the meeting to order at approximately 7:06 PM.

Present: William A. Estrella, Jr., William M. O'Dell, Paul Silva, Diana B. Campbell, David L. Dugan, Karen A. Lynch and John P. Saviano; and Edward P. Mara, Superintendent; Melinda L. Thies, Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction; Jane F. Correia, Director of Administration and Finance; and Kevin McAllister, Esq., for Andrew D. Henneous, Esq., District Solicitor

Absent: Marjorie J. McBride and Paul E. Brule

All present were invited to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr. Estrella asked for a moment of silence in honor of our veterans. He thanked Mr. Pugh for seeing that flag etiquette is maintained throughout the District.

ACCOLADES

A few weeks ago, a Mt. Hope High School staff member experienced a sudden and extreme medical emergency. One of the students who was near by, took quick action, remained calm and protected the staff member from a fall, preventing what could have been a worse medical situation. We would like to thank this student and commend her for her very responsible actions. Thank you to SHAYLA WALDEN.

Governor Carcieri launched a Wellness Innovation Award Program this year. Thirty-six organizations across six different settings throughout the state submitted applications and were eligible for an award. We are proud to say that Susan Donovan and Guiteras School was chosen as the first recipient of the Award in the school setting. Governor Carcieri has commended Guiteras on its commitment to furthering the health and wellness of Rhode Island residents. The School Committee joins the Governor in commending Susan Donovan and the Guiteras staff for their “winning examples of resourcefulness in wellness and health promotion.”

PRESENTATION BY MT. HOPE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jaime Crowley, Assistant Principal for Guidance, gave a brief overview of Mt. Hope High School. Their goal setting model is driven by mission, guided by beliefs and proven by data, Mt. Hope’s mission being “To educate all students to become skillful learners and

responsible, productive citizens.” An issue that has plagued the high school for a long time is the graduation rate which 10 years ago was among the State’s worst. Although there has been improvement since 2002-2003 (76%), the 2006-2007 rate of 83% is still below the State average. The attendance rate has held close to the State average. A team at the high school has spent months pouring through State and school data, including 9th and 10th grade academic failures, retention, and exit interviews with students, in an effort to diagnose, analyze and formulate solutions. Students sometimes disengage when they cannot relate classes to employment.

Early intervention has been developed in the form of identifying at-risk students in the 8th grade, development of the Jump Start Program (a successful summer enrichment program in which 20 of the 70 targeted students participated), and strengthening of transitioning efforts. Further interventions such as the PBGR Recovery Program, new course offerings with greater academic supports, and the Mt. Hope Plus Alternative Program have been very successful.

Instruction has been enhanced by grants (CSR, PRIMES, RI Learn and Serve), partnerships with RIDE and Roger Williams University, digital portfolio and co-teaching, and the high school is excited about the Virtual High School Course Offerings coming this spring. The high school is also working on personalization to prevent students from

falling through the cracks. Mr. Estrella strongly encouraged parent involvement. Dr. Mara said I-Parent is available to high school parents; participation by teachers is currently voluntary and will become mandatory next year; the Middle School will also be coming on board. Professional Development is also used to help solve the graduation rate problem.

A great source of pride are the high school's ELA and Math proficiency rankings, both in the top ten in the State's 55 high schools—4th in ELA and 9th in Math. Mr. Crowley remarked that the graduation rate “does not fit with who we are as a school.” Mr. Saviano, a member of the Mt. Hope SIT team, commented that what is being done at the high school is phenomenal and that Mr. Crowley is doing a great job. Mr. Silva stated that Mr. Crowley proved he is not a politician, by starting with the things he does not like and focusing efforts to improve them; he commended Mr. Crowley for exceeding the Committee's expectations for the high school. Mr. Estrella said the efforts of everyone at the high school are appreciated; our kids are good and have the capacity to finish high school but need encouragement to go to school.

WELLNESS INNOVATION AT GUITERAS / GOVERNOR'S AWARD

Mrs. Sonya Whipp, Guiteras Principal, said Guiteras has worked hard to embrace the District's wellness policy—they have cut out all food in the classroom; the staff has come up with alternatives for

celebrations such as pencils, stickers, and donating a book to the classroom to be read in the student's honor on their birthday; this is due in part to practical reasons—allergies and obesity. Mrs. Whipp is proud of Susan Donovan and the work she did in applying for the Governor's Award; the panel was impressed with the well-rounded, low cost program that utilizes parent and community volunteers and in which a high percentage of students participate; popular activities are Chance to Dance, the Run/Walk Club and Enrichment Blocks. There is also a staff wellness component coordinated by the Head Teacher, Mrs. Perrotto; staff members walk the bike path together or run up and down the school stairs. Mrs. Whipp invited everyone to their Family Fun Night on Monday, November 26 at 6:00 PM.

The Healthy Schools Video, featuring Ms. Donovan, Guiteras School, Mrs. Whipp and a Guiteras student, was viewed. Ms. Donovan said it is proven that healthy children learn better; unfortunately Physical Education on a daily basis will not be part of the curriculum and everyone has to come together in these wellness efforts. She recognized the volunteers from Roger Williams University; a great motivator is to have other people interested; the students are happy to come to school. Ms. Donovan would like to see programs like this in all the schools; she encouraged the District to plan schools that are conducive to physical education and multi-use.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - 8:17 PM

In accordance with Open Meeting Laws 42-46-5(a)(1)-(9), 2(b), Mr. O'Dell motioned to go into Executive Session at 8:17 PM to discuss the contract negotiation process. Mr. Silva seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

RESUMPTION OF MEETING – 9:00 PM

The Committee discussed the contract negotiation process and received legal advice from the Solicitor.

ANALYSIS OF CHART OF ACCOUNTS

Mrs. Correia described the new State-mandated 32-digit system that Bristol Warren is piloting for the State. The purpose is statewide accountability and a method to compare finite data. Mrs. Pauline Silva has done a tremendous amount of work to institute the new system. Mrs. Silva said this new system has been in the works since 2006; we have been asked to go through the state accounting manual as well, which is over 400 pages. This system should greatly enhance the ability to compare expenditures, funding sources and per pupil costs among the districts. Mr. Estrella is concerned that we will be held to a higher standard than the other districts and scrutinized until everyone comes on board. Mr. Saviano feels we will shine more and it will be easier to determine that some of the expenses we must cover from our school budget are being absorbed by the towns in other districts; also, when coming before Joint

Finance, comparisons to other districts will be more easily explained. Mr. Dugan said this will allow us to compare oranges to oranges and put us all on a level playing field. Mrs. Lynch agrees that differences in per pupil costs will be much easier to explain. Mr. Saviano said RIDE people highly praised Mrs. Silva and Mrs. Correia and that he was proud to be associated with them both. Mr. O'Dell commented that the more user friendly the information is, the less Mrs. Correia will have to be troubled for information. Mrs. Correia said the information will be loaded down to the data warehouse quarterly and the goal of the State is to marry the performance data with the resources data.

OPEN FORUM

Mr. O'Dell announced an emergency meeting of the Budget/Facilities Subcommittee is scheduled for November 15 at 5:30 PM in the Kickemuit Library to discuss the moving of the Technology Department.

Mrs. Campbell needed to schedule a Policy Subcommittee meeting to discuss facilities maintenance and to review the Superintendent's goals; it will be Monday, November 26 at 5:30 PM suited the Committee the best.

Mrs. Lynch said a Phase II Elementary Facilities Task Force meeting will be scheduled for early December to determine the group's direction.

Mr. Estrella reminded everyone there is only one full Committee meeting in December on the 10th at Byfield School; he asked that holiday activities at the schools be posted on the pink sheets. Dr. Mara said Tom Jones, the play, is being performed at the high school this weekend.

ADJOURNMENT – 9:42 PM

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. O'Dell, seconded by Mr. Saviano, motioned to adjourn at 9:42 PM. The motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Silva, Secretary

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